

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate, comprising:

arranging a sheet-shaped separator so as to cover both surfaces of an electrode plate;

thermally welding the separator by applying a first heating plate along a to-be-bonded edge of the separator adjacent to the electrode plate, the first heating plate having a width which is so set as to correspond to a width of a bonded portion of the separator; and

cutting off the separator by pressing a second heating plate against substantially a central part of the bonded portion,

wherein the separator is made of ~~an ordinary~~ a fiber cloth comprising a resin component which ~~is sublimed by heating~~ sublimes during cutting with heating .

2. (Previously Presented) The method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 1,

P22035.A03

wherein the thermally welding and the cutting are performed in combination in one process by use of a single-unit heating plate having a protrusion that cuts the separator, and the single-unit heating plate serves as the first and second heating plates in common.

3. (Previously Presented) The method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 1,

wherein, at least in the thermally welding, the separator is supported, via a cushioning member, at one surface opposite to its first heating plate side surface.

4. (Previously Presented) The method for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 1,

wherein, in the thermally welding, a protective sheet is interposed between the first heating plate and the separator.

5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate, comprising:

a bonding and cutting member comprising a heating plate having a width which is so set as to correspond to a bonded portion of a separator, the separator being so arranged as to cover both surfaces of an electrode plate, the bonding and cutting member having a cutting protrusion formed in substantially a central part thereof to cut the bonded portion,

wherein ~~the separator is made of an ordinary fiber cloth comprising a resin component which is sublimed by heating~~ the bonding and cutting member is constructed

P22035.A03

by combining a first heating plate having the cutting protrusion to cut the separator with a plurality of second heating plates arranged on both sides of the first heating plate with an interposed insulating material therebetween to bond the separator.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 5,

~~wherein the bonding and cutting member is constructed by combining a first heating plate having the cutting protrusion to cut the separator with a plurality of second heating plates arranged on both sides of the first heating plate with an interposed insulating material therebetween to bond the separator, and a separate heater is provided for the first heating plate and the second heating plate to heat the first and second heating plates individually.~~

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate, comprising:

a second heating plate having a width which is so set as to correspond to a bonded portion of a separator arranged to cover both surfaces of an electrode plate; and

a first heating plate that cuts substantially a central part of the bonded portion,

~~wherein the separator is made of an ordinary fiber cloth comprising a resin component which is sublimed by heating~~ the second heating plate has a concave groove in the widthwise central position on its front-end surface.

P22035.A03

8. (Previously Presented) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 5,

wherein a cushioning member is arranged on a back side of the bonded portion of the separator.

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 7,

wherein a protective sheet is interposed between the second heating plate and the separator,

and a device that supplies and takes up the protective sheet is provided.

10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus for attaching a separator to an electrode plate according to claim 7,

wherein a cushioning member is arranged on a back side of the bonded portion of the separator.